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Washington Scene

By George Dixon

Bring on Those Lampreys

For the eight years he has been in Congress, Sen. Charles E. Potter (R-Mich.), has been fighting for funds to destroy the Great Lakes lamprey. He has just been informed by Rep. Edward T. Miller (R-Md.) of the Eastern Shore, that he is trying to destroy a marine gold mine.



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The lamprey, an eel-like vampire, is charged with killing \$8 million worth of Great Lakes trout and whitefish a year. Miller has just sent word to Potter:

"The crabbers in my district will take all the lampreys your people can get! Our folks will make 'em more profitable for your folks than the fish they destroyed."

Miller disclosed that the commercial crabbers of Chesapeake Bay have just concluded a series of tests, using pickled lampreys to bait their pot lines, and have found it is as attractive to crabs as the ordinary pickled-eel bait they have been using from time immemorial.

The ordinary pickled-eels are currently costing the crabbers 25 cents a pound. The average crabber uses about 40

pounds a day. There are more than 1500 commercial crabbers in the Chesapeake alone, plus heaven only knows how many amateurs crabbing for fun.

Miller estimates that his constituents, alone, could use \$15,000 worth of lamprey bait a day for the six months of the crab season. If the thousands of other crabbers of the East Coast used a proportionate share it wouldn't be long before eager lamprey-catchers emptied the Great Lakes of lampreys, leaving them safe for the repropagation of trout and whitefish.

AS THIS Independence Day approached, the lamprey situation appeared to be at its darkest, until Miller came in with his good word. The Great Lakes fishermen had no cause for Fourth of July rejoicing. The lampreys had reduced them to such privation they couldn't afford firecrackers anyway.

It looked so dark that only last week the Senate approved a treaty with Canada to share the enormous cost of trying to control the slimy snakelike predators. The United States already has spent a fortune. The Fish and Wildlife Service alone has spent more than \$2 million just to train a lake-going task force of lamprey-killers.

In announcing the results of the lamprey-bait tests, Miller gave full credit for the idea

to Emmett Andrews of Cambridge, Md. Andrews used to be with Fish and Wildlife but is now with the Central Intelligence Agency. Just how, or why, he changed from hip boots to a cloak and dagger I cannot imagine, but he is still spending all the time he can spare from undercover agenting at his favorite pastime of pulling succulent crabs from the Chesapeake.

ANDREWS DIRECTED a volunteer army of commercial crabbers in testing out the lamprey bait. Strips of pickled lamprey were placed near strips of ordinary pickled eel. Where they were given a choice, the crabs preferred the lamprey.

Senator Potter worried so much about the lampreys he saw them wriggling in his sleep. He had his right-hand man, Thomas McIntyre, devoting most of his energies to the invaders from salt water.

The solon employed every device he could think of to incense his colleagues against the lampreys, so they would vote millions for extermination. He even went to the length of touring the Capitol with a preserved lamprey in a bottle, holding it up for unprepared passers-by to behold.

He turned some of the strongest stomachs in the halls of Congress.

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